Transcript: Artesia Dupree

with Autumn Dupree, granddaughter

Save Your Oakland Stories

Recorded October 14, 2023 by

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IMAGES: Photo of Artesia Dupree and Autumn Dupree, October 14, 2023

INTERVIEWER (Elena Botkin-Levy)
So today is October 14, 2023. We're recording at the Oakland Main Library for Save Your Oakland Stories. I'm Elena Botkin Levy from GEMS Oral Histories recording with Artesia Dupree. I'm so glad you're here today.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Thank you.

INTERVIEWER
So I'm going to have you introduce yourself, your name, your age, when and where you were born.

ARTESIA DUPREE
My name is Artesia Dupree, and I am 61 years old. And I am a lifelong resident of Oakland, CA. Born Oakland Hospital, and I have lived here all of my life. I've only been away from Oakland for a short few years, but this is my home. This is home.

INTERVIEWER
Talk a little bit about your relationship to Oakland.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Well, I have a strong relationship with Oakland because, a little bit of history. I am an adoptee. My great aunt adopted me. She was the first senior citizen who was allowed to adopt an infant at the age of 15, Alameda County. So I've been rooted here. My church at the time, my pastor was able to witness and allow and help Alameda County to grant her that provision to be able to adopt me as a young person. So it's really made. Like I've gone to school here. I graduated from Merritt College and this is just like I said, it's I have been here all of my life and I love Oakland. I'm disappointed with some of the things that occur but I love Oakland and at this point I really wouldn't live anywhere else but here.

INTERVIEWER
Yeah. Tell me a little bit about the environment growing up for you and what it looked like, what it felt like.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Oh my God, it was so wonderful back in the day. We had so much to do. The kids would come out, we would play hide and seek during the summertime. They used to have a parade that would come down 98th. They had a business district that was run by all the business people in the Elmhurst district. Oh my gosh. I would enjoy my time at Merritt College, being able to go up to Mormon Temple. Going on field trips to some of the local manufacturers like Sunshine Biscuits. Kilpatrick's, going there getting bread, walking around, looking at all the things that go on there. Just it was, just a great place to be. You had wonderful friends, the neighborhoods were good and safe, and you just felt it was so homey. It was such a bedroom community that it just really was a wonderful place to be.

INTERVIEWER
Mmm. What would you name was your community? What was your neighborhood?

ARTESIA DUPREE
I lived in Elmhurst. I actually lived right across from Elmhurst Park. And so that was somewhere that me and my friends hung out with all the time. It was something to do. It was always something fun. You had the neighborhood lady who made candy. Again, you go over there, you get candy, you get popsicles, you go to the park, you hang out. Everybody take a break, go in the house, use the bathroom and say, OK, we're going to meet again later and then we'll come back out and play, take a nap, come back out. It was great. Drink from the water hose. Everybody knew everybody. If you got in trouble, everybody got in trouble. And it wasn't, you know, your neighbor – your neighbor was your mom. It really was raise a village. And it just was, to me, it was a great place to be.

INTERVIEWER
What elementary school did you go to?

ARTESIA DUPREE
I went to St. Louis Bertrand's. I started at Stonehurst Elementary, and then I went to St. Louis Bertrand's. And then from there I graduated from Bishop – well, I went to Bishop O'Dowd and graduated from Saint Elizabeth. It was so interesting. My son's kindergarten teacher – just how life would have it – was my kindergarten teacher. So here we are like 50 years later. He is, she is, I'm like, you are still teaching?! You have not retired? She was my son's teacher. And so that was such a crack-up just to be able to have that connection, that camaraderie with her and to see how the times have changed. She had – it was so weird when I walked in the classroom on the first day to take my son to school and I was like, Oh my God, I know you. It's been 50 plus years and she was still there.

[Autumn makes some sounds]
INTERVIEWER
Do you want to introduce yourself too so we know you're here? Do you want to say your name on the mic?

ARTESIA DUPREE
What is your name? Tell your name. Since you're going to be here making all this noise. Say my name is Autumn Dupree. Oh, now you're all good.

INTERVIEWER
Shy. Well, we know you're here.
What do you remember about that teacher?

ARTESIA DUPREE
Mrs. Nelson. I actually remembered her when she was single and I remember when she got married and how happy she was. But she was, she was kind. She was strict. And back in the day if you act up in class,

you would pop you on your leg. You would get a little smack and it's like, OK, behave yourself. But she was a great teacher who had passion for students. So it didn't surprise me that 50 years later she was still teaching because she was, she was everybody's mom, she was everybody's teacher. I remember Mrs. Nelson and what a great teacher she was. I actually ended up going to high school with a couple of her kids and so we all became friends. And so, just talk about just life learners. There was another teacher, her name was Miss Cox, and Miss Cox was the other teacher that I could remember who had such an impact on me and I went to school with her kids as well, and we're still friends to this day. But she was that teacher. She made sure that every student knew how to read. Every student knew how to count. She did not – if one child was struggling, she would take the time to really sit with them, work with them. She didn't just dismiss them or think, oh, they had a behavior and she would just say, oh, that's normal to the parents, that they're going to get it, just work with them. But she had so much patience and so much love and passion for teaching that it was just amazing. And like I said, to see her, to see Mrs. Nelson all those years later and to know that they really, their calling was to teach. Their calling was really to teach.

INTERVIEWER
What were you like as a kid?

ARTESIA DUPREE
I was rambunctious to an extent, but somewhat shy. I was that awkward kid with glasses and braces. And then when high school changed everything then I blossomed as a butterfly. But everybody knew me. My nickname was Turtle. And I'm like, why is my nickname Turtle? But said, you know, you're slow, but you end up – in the end, you run the race. And so I was, yeah, a cheerleader. I started singing at the kids choir when I was five years old at St. Louis Bertrand's. And I still sing to this day. Here 60 years and I'm still singing. I belong to local churches, that was just my thing to do. But I was very outgoing. Girl Scouts, Brownies, you name it, I was involved. My granny made sure that I did that. My granny made sure that I did that. And so I would say that that was just such a highlight. But I was a fun kid and everybody knew me and that was, that was the fun part.

INTERVIEWER
Mmm. Where do you sing today?

ARTESIA DUPREE
I sing at Shiloh Baptist Church in Hayward. That's my church now. I've been a member for 30 years there. And that's where I sing in the choir there. I still do some stuff a little bit around the Bay Area. Jazz, a little bit. Couple of my friends actually went on to have choirs, professional choirs, and so every now and then I will do a guest appearance. And just fun.

INTERVIEWER
It sounds like you have so many memories in this city.

ARTESIA DUPREE
I do. I – man, it would take me hours to go over all the memories. I can remember walking down E 14th when the bus wouldn't come. So I said, you know – it was me and my friends – we'll say we'll start walking and if the bus comes, we'll jump on the bus. But by the time talking, playing, we were halfway home by the time the bus would come and it's like, oh, we save our nickels. There were the corner stores where you would take all your penny candy and you would go in to this, the local corner store – that everybody knew – and you would buy penny candy and everybody would pool the candy together and share it. I really do have some wonderful – as I'm thinking about it, really just reminiscing about all the wonderful things that I remembered as a kid growing up in Oakland.

INTERVIEWER
You said you've noticed a lot of changes in the city.

ARTESIA DUPREE
I have. I noticed – I went away for a short time when I went to college. I went to Stanford University and so I left for a little while and then I came back. And I recognized that a lot of the industry – because one of the things that always intrigued me about Oakland, it was a blue collar – friendly for blue collar workers. So there was lots of manufacturing, lots of shift work so you can make an honest day's wages, honest day living, take care of your family. But as those businesses started to migrate away, I noticed that the town was starting to change and not be so bedroom. I also was here, unfortunately see the proliferation of drugs come to the community and hopelessness has seemed to become a norm. And I watched when Sunshine Biscuits and Mother's Cookies and Kilpatrick's and all those – Del Monte – when they started to leave. Fleischmann's Yeast, the American Bottle Company, Gerber Foods, all of those places, when they started to leave, people stayed here, but they're like, OK, now what do I do? Silicon Valley was booming, but a lot of the people here did not have the skill background to go out, or nor wanted to commute all the way to Silicon Valley to make a living. So they couldn't no longer really live, make a living here in Oakland. So they stayed. But then what now? And so I noticed the change. And it was very disheartening because things that I considered pinnacles of the town were now starting to fold up or had just gone away. Mainstays of the town. Fleischmann's Yeast used to have this horn every morning. It would blow at 8:00. If you were walking to school and you heard the horn at 8:00, you were late. So you started running because it's like, 'Oh my God, I'm late!' But that was your marker for telling you if you were on time or not. And I can remember the day so clearly when they imploded it and removed it. But it was, it was kind of like – I don't know if you're familiar with the Flintstones – and at the end of the day, the horn would go off and he'd yabba dabba do. But that horn was that for our community. That told you if it rang 8:00 sharp, and if it rang and you weren't in school, you were late. And the teacher would even go, OK, you're late because the horn went off and I –. But it was just something that you look forward to.

INTERVIEWER
You said you remember that day so clearly.

ARTESIA DUPREE
I do. I do because I remember on the news, Channel 2 News had said, you know, today is the last day. If you want to see it, take a picture of it because by the end of this afternoon, it's going to be gone. And so I could remember going, walking down the street – 'cause I was only maybe about 10 minutes from there down the street, and 'cause I lived off of 98th and C that's where I grew up – and I remember walking down and watching all the activity. And I remember the day that they ignited the explosion, the whatever you called, that caused it to come down. And I watched it and I watched the cloud of dust. It probably wasn't safe for us, but we were out there and I did watch and witness the implosion of it. And it just seemed like it was an end of an era. But yeah, I noticed just the change.

INTERVIEWER
When you think about the future of yourself in the city, and the city, what do you hope for?

ARTESIA DUPREE
You know, I was walking around, just kind of looking around the neighborhood and I noticed all the abandoned cars. Driving, I noticed all the businesses that have left and the buildings are abandoned. I looked at all the graffiti. What I hope for for Oakland is if it could get the zest back that it had in its heyday, give people hopefulness again that there is an opportunity for Oakland to be thriving like it used to be. And I don't know if that's something that could actually happen, but that's my hope and my dream. And I always said, OK, if I won 7 point, 1.7 billion dollars I know that I would invest at least 2 billion of it in cleaning up Oakland, putting Oakland back on the map so that it's a place that people want to visit, that people here – gets us off the crime list. Gives people hope, gives people work to do, gives just a feeling of community again. That's what I really look to if I had a wish list that I could create for Oakland.

INTERVIEWER
You said you went away to Stanford and then you came back home.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Yes, Yes.

INTERVIEWER
So what happened after school for you?

ARTESIA DUPREE
Well, I was working in Silicon Valley and my grandmother had gotten ill. Of course, because she invested a lot of her life taking care of me, I felt it was only right that I do the same for her. So I actually landed in Fremont, got married, worked really hard trying to go to school and pull everything together. Had my family and then my husband was here and he said, well, I am gonna – let's move back to Oakland. I'm like, well, you know, Granny's there, I have friends there, his family, his mom was here. And so I said, you know what? Let's move back to Oakland. And that's how we, we came back. We were fortunate enough to purchase a home that we've been in for over 20 years, not too far from where I grew up at. So it's

home. I needed to come back. I've thought about moving to Louisiana, which is my husband's home state, but it wouldn't be anything like what I know in Oakland. And he's pretty rooted here too, as well. And then we have our granddaughter, who is very rooted here, and both of my children have grown up in Oakland.

INTERVIEWER
When you think about either memories, strong memories of the city, or strong locations – you certainly talked about Sunshine Biscuits and yeast factory – is there anywhere else that stands out to you?

ARTESIA DUPREE
One of the things I loved to do is if you went up to the top of 98th and you stood by Bishop O'Dowd, you could see – then the hill is not that high, but you could see all over Oakland. You can look all the way across to where you'd see the planes taking off at Oakland Airport. And I used to just love to just stand there. I would walk up the hill by Nolan Zoo and just stand there and just gaze at the town and think about how beautiful it was from up there. It just, especially at night, the lights would sparkle and it was just a town that was very emotional and very moving when you would stand up there and look at it. I would look at the airplanes and think about somebody's going somewhere special. I wish I was on an airplane going somewhere special and I could remember, I could hear the Amtrak train in the distance. I could hear Bart and just the movement, just absorbing the movement of the town. But that was my special place. It was at the top of 98th, looking down over the town.

INTERVIEWER
That's a great vision. I love that. I know this is the shortest amount of time, but does it feel like anything is missing from you and your story in Oakland?

ARTESIA DUPREE
I think that what's missing is all the people that I've known and who have either moved away or have passed away. I can remember some of the wonderful afternoons of just hanging out with them. I miss that. I miss – I know I could go on and on about how wonderful Oakland was and still is, but I really miss the community atmosphere. I never wanted to live somewhere that I didn't feel comfortable. When I hear the story – sometimes I have to just disconnect from the news because I never wanted to feel that I can't stand on my front porch, I can't drive my car, that it's not safe for me to walk with my granddaughter if I want somewhere. Those things, I miss the bedroom community that Oakland was known for. When Alameda Naval Air Station went away, when the Oakland Army base went away, all of those things that created such a great home environment has gone away. There's nothing for the young people to do now. So it's like, can I create a safe zone? So sometimes my house becomes that where the kids come and work on their motorbikes, where they come and eat. I said, you know, I only asked for a couple of things: don't curse, don't smoke, don't drink, don't steal from me. But outside of that, you are welcome. I try to have food and soda and be a comfortable zone for kids, a safe zone for them to come and hang out at. And I'm hoping that we'll always be able to provide that. But if I could tell my story, that would be something that I miss, is the community and the connectivity that Oakland used to have that seems to not be as prevalent as it used to be.

INTERVIEWER
Mmhmm. That story of the woman in your neighborhood who made candy. Tell me more about that.

ARTESIA DUPREE
She was the candy lady. So everyone knew if you had a nickel or $0.10 you could go get – she made these little Dixie Dixie Cup kool-aid pops. And on a summer day you take your candy, you go to her back door and she had pickles, she had candy, she had everything you wanted. But she was – everybody knew her. Everybody loved her. Everybody respected her. And so that was somewhere that you would go. And again, it was just a fun thing to do, everybody meet up there and get candy and just have a good time. You met people from other blocks. There was no rivalry cause D Street wasn't against C Street wasn't against B Street. We all grew up and we all knew each other so there wasn't rivalry where, you know, D Street's better than E Street, there wasn't any of that stuff. And the candy lady was kind of the focal point and everybody got up and you knew that she opened at 10. So you knew that you were gonna go to her house at 10 and you get in line and you get your candy. And she didn't mind. I know she didn't make a lot of money, but she just enjoyed the kids. She didn't have any kids of her own. So I think she just enjoyed having the kids around.

INTERVIEWER
You remember her name?

ARTESIA DUPREE
I don't. I want to say it's Miss Betty, but I can't say for sure. But I think it was Miss Betty. But everybody knew her.

INTERVIEWER
It's so great. Well, you paint a real picture of the town.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Yeah, 'cause it was my home. It is my home. I can remember Doggy Diner in Oakland. You would go in and get your hot dog for $0.50. And we would share it. Everybody would put their money in. If it was a bag of french fries, a greasy bag of french fries, we'd all put up a dollar. We'd eat it out of the – pour the ketchup in it and the salt, eat it, share it. It was, it was fun. It was, it was fun. Who cared about hands being dirty? Who cared about, you know, [laughs]. Everybody reached in the bag and grab some f rench fries and we would share it. And sometimes it'd be one person who had all the money. They would buy it and share it. But when it wasn't that way, everybody would pool their money together. And we'd buy a hot dog from Doggy Diners. Or we'd go to Giants Burger and buy a bag of french fries. And we'd all sit around and just open the bag up and lay out and eat it and have a good time. And then when you were thirsty, you'd just go to somebody's yard and get the water hose and drink [laughs]. We didn't think about all the things we think about now with germs and everything else. You drink from the water hose. When the street light came on, it was time to go in. Don't let your mom call you, 'cause you're going to get a beat down, 'cause you were supposed to be in the house when the street light came on. But

everybody knew that. And we'd all say, you know, good night and we'd all meet up again the next day. That was my pleasure.

INTERVIEWER
What kind of games would you play out on the street?

ARTESIA DUPREE
Hide and seek. Kickball. Tetherball. Soccer. I would say our version of soccer. The girls would play jacks. The boys would play kickball or stickball. Sometimes – we didn't have a lot of money. We didn't have all elaborate kinds of toys, but we were outside in the sunshine, running, feeling good, playing games. Hide and seek was one of my favorites. But I was slow, so I always got caught [laughs]. But it just it, it was fun just being outside. We couldn't wait till we could go outside. Saturday morning you watch the cartoons – you got a bowl of cereal, you watch the Saturday morning cartoon lineup, when it was over by 11, everybody met outside. You had to do your chores, then you go outside for the rest of the day. Mom didn't worry about where you were, who you were with. She didn't have to worry about it. Your parents didn't worry about it. You were either at somebody's house or that – or she would just hear the kids were all laughing and running up and down the street, but it was safe and you felt okay to be outside.

INTERVIEWER
What kind of music would you listen to?

ARTESIA DUPREE
I grew up listening to R&B and gospel. Granny didn't believe too much in R&B, even though I know she would sneak and listen to some jazz sometimes. But she was really a gospel person. But my birth parents, they were R&B people. They listened to Aretha Franklin and Marvin Gaye and just all the old school. So I grew up listening to a lot of old school music. And still to this day, it's my delight.

INTERVIEWER
Amazing. Well, thank you so much for sharing your stories.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Oh, well, thank you for having me. To reminisce about how wonderful Oakland is – I just recently came off of a cruise with some classmates and we went to Ensenada, but it was a class reunion. So instead of doing a banquet, we did a cruise. And so we would sit around and talk about don't you remember this? And don't you remember that teacher? And don't you remember what we used to do? And that was so fun just to reminisce about the different stores. There was Gabardine, there was Woolworth, just – when you went and got your first ears pierced at Eastmont Mall and you go to Bedazzl. Everybody went to Bedazzl and got their ears pierced. And I'm surprised our ears didn't fall off because they weren't exactly the most hygienic people back then. But everybody got their ears pierced at Bedazzl in Eastmont Mall. But that was something that was kind of coming out, you know, growing up, if you went and got your ears pierced. I can just remember taking my $3 and going to get my ears pierced and then coming home. And I didn't tell my Granny I was gonna do it and she had a conniption, but it was too late. ‘Cause she

believed in clip ons and no piercings on your body. So when I came home with my ears pierced, I thought she was gonna have a fit. But those are just the things that I can remember. And I still try to make good memories in Oakland by wonderful eateries that I go to, taking her [granddaughter] to the park when I'm able to. So still try to create an environment where she feels that it's a good community. In spite of everything else.

INTERVIEWER
And it sounds like you're a business owner.

ARTESIA DUPREE
I am. It's called Just Artesia's Designs. But I kind of dabble in a lot of different things. But my delight is making candy. I make a Caramel Kahlua Cheesecake and I make Pecan Turtles. I kind of dabble in a little bit event planning. I did catering for a long time, but that was exhausting. My husband and I, Dupree's Catering, so we would do that. Wonderful Louisiana foods. But I've gotten too old and it's too tiring and it's too costly now [laughs] with the price of food. But yeah, that – but my my mainstay is the Caramel Kalua Cheesecakes.

INTERVIEWER
I love that in the context of hearing about the candy lady, it's like a lineage.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Yes, exactly. I never would think that I would be there, but I created a wonderful recipe and Oh my goodness, sometimes I can't fill enough orders – make enough to fill enough orders. I'm like, you know what? I am exhausted. But I'm going to try something new now. I'm going to try a butter rum pecan turtle and see how that flavor comes out.

INTERVIEWER
Can't wait to try it.

ARTESIA DUPREE
So I'm like, oh, my gosh. But yeah, it started out in my kitchen, just making stuff for my friends to eat, making theme cakes. And people were like, oh, I want more of that. And I'm like, oh, OK, I didn't think it was that great and it just kind of blew up [laughing]. But yeah, so we dabble in a few different things. My husband is a, he's the cook and I'm mostly the dessert person. I'm the pastry here, making wonderful pastries and so on. And I'm hoping to pass it on to my granddaughter. So we make cookies together.

INTERVIEWER
So you're a baker, too? Amazing.

ARTESIA DUPREE
So you like to make cookies? What did we do the other day? We made what?

AUTUMN DUPREE
Cookies.

ARTESIA DUPREE
With M&M's in them?

AUTUMN DUPREE
Mhhmm.

INTERVIEWER
Yum.

ARTESIA DUPREE
They were good. Who ate them all? Who ate all your cookies? Your dad?

AUTUMN DUPREE
Mhhmm.

INTERVIEWER
Well, thanks to both of you for being here today.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Thank you for having us

INTERVIEWER
Super fun.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Say bye.

AUTUMN DUPREE
Bye.

ARTESIA DUPREE
OK.

[Hit record again to capture this story that Artesia started sharing]

INTERVIEWER
OK, so you're saying your granny owned a boarding house?

ARTESIA DUPREE
Yes, my granny owned a boarding house on 14th and Campbell in West Oakland. Back in the day, in the '30s and '40s, though Amtrak porters could not get rooms when they would come into town. And so she had a rooming house and they would go there. And they – her nickname was Tola. But everybody would go to Tola's place and they would eat a good meal and they had a place to stay. I grew up there until she bought her house in East Oakland in 1968. But that was a fun place to be to growing up in a rooming house. But she wanted to provide something. And that's where I learned to do a lot of cooking, is because she was an amazing cook. But she would offer a place for the porters to stay when they would come to town because they had nowhere else to stay?

INTERVIEWER
Do you remember what it looked like?

ARTESIA DUPREE
Yes, it was this monstrosity of a two-story pink house. I don't know why. It's funny, the house is still standing now. But it's on the corner of 14th and Campbell. It's no longer pink, but for the years they knew it was Tola's house and it was this huge pink house. It had stairwells and rooms and lots of great places to – and fun places to to run around in because it was an old Victorian. And it still exists today. But yes, she owned it. A single Black woman owned in Oakland, owned a rooming house and she took in borders and that's somewhere that they were able to stay in the '30s and '40s. So I have wonderful pictures of a lot of that stuff that I'm sure that would be wonderful in archive.

INTERVIEWER
Definitely. I know the History Room would be excited about that.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Yes, I actually even have the passbook of when she purchased her first home and how much she would pay and you would go into the location and they would stamp it and how much it was $68 a month. But I still have the old passbook that she used to use from the savings and loan company that I kept. So I just cherish a lot of the stuff that I've had of hers. But wonderful pictures [phone rings] and all that kind of stuff. I don't know why that's going off. But yes, so I have all of those memories and pictures. And when she would step out with the girls and all the classic cars and everything, I have a lot of those pictures I've kept over the years.

INTERVIEWER
Such amazing stories that must have come through those doors with all those folks.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Absolutely. And yeah, like I said, she was from Louisiana. She was from Abbeville, LA. And she moved here and because of her, a lot of her family came because when they would come to California, they would stay at her rooming house. Then when they got their own houses, they would move out. But she,

she became a safe haven for for her family as well. So she is the reason why a lot of her family came from Texas and Louisiana because she had this rooming house. But yeah, she put $500 down and bought this building and she just everybody knew Tola and that's where they would eat – stop! [to Autumn]

INTERVIEWER
So Tola's rooming house.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Yes, Tola's rooming house and everyone knew it. And of course, she had girls there for the porters. But she always denied that she was a Madam, but we kind of suspected [laughs] that there was something going on a little more there. But she was one of the only places that a lot of the Amtrak Black porters could stay and feel comfortable and have a good meal until they took their trains out.

INTERVIEWER
When did she pass?

ARTESIA DUPREE
She passed in 1993. So she – even though she said she was only like 92 years old or 90 years old, I think she was over 100. Because they had her brother in Louisiana who passed away at 110 and she remembered when her mother had given birth to him. So that's why I know she was older than what the census had given her. But at the time she died at 90, at 90 years old. So she was an amazing woman.

INTERVIEWER
It sounds like a yeah.

ARTESIA DUPREE
And 2nd grade education. Taught herself to read using wrappers from soap and boxes, food boxes. That's how she taught herself to read, because it was too far to walk to school every day. And if she had to work in the fields, it was too far. So amazing woman, amazing stories. I am thankful that I had her to, to be able to live with her and to experience all that.

INTERVIEWER
A legacy.

ARTESIA DUPREE
Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. So I'm just thankful to even recount this stuff, 'cause I can smile and giggle and know just how enjoyable my life was with them growing up in Oakland.

INTERVIEWER
Thanks.